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AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PASS TO AMEMBASSY MALABO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/11
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [KDEM](#) [IV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION'S CREDIBILITY IN TATTERS

CLASSIFIED BY: Wanda Nesbitt, Ambassador, State, Embassy Abidjan;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) Summary: The credibility of the Independent Electoral Commission has been severely damaged by the admission of its president, Robert Mambe, that he authorized an internal crosschecking of data on potential voters and distributed it to some, but not all, of the key political parties. President Gbagbo is furious over this revelation; the FPI has called on Mambe to resign and is organizing a large public demonstration to denounce the CEI. PM Soro and presidential advisor Alcide Djedje traveled to Ouagadougou over the weekend to consult Compaore and identify a way forward. This scandal will undoubtedly delay publication of the electoral list, and affect the eventual election date. End Summary

12. (C) In a January 9 conversation, SRSB Choi expressed deep concern about the electoral process in Cote d'Ivoire. Choi then recounted the key points from a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Soro on January 7: CEI President Mambe admitted that he and another CEI member conducted an independent, cross-checking operation, because they concerned that only a small percentage (@30%) of individuals on the "unverified" list had come forward with additional proof of citizenship. Mambe acknowledged allowing the RDR representative to the CEI (the RDR is one of the main opposition parties) to conduct namechecks using a set of parameters that neither the INS, Sagem, or the CEI's full commission had approved. As a result of these checks, 450,000 people were reportedly verified as being Ivorian, and a CD containing their names was distributed, with Mambe's approval, to the regional CEI committees. As most of the regional CEI committees are dominated by the RDR and PDCI political parties, the clear implication is that the electoral commission's action was meant to benefit the opposition, and has disadvantaged president Gbagbo and the FPI.

13. (C) Efforts to contain the damage and prevent this development from derailing the entire electoral process are underway. PM Soro has already ordered the recall of all distributed CDs and instructed CEI members to cease any actions based on names that were on the CD. He and presidential advisor Alcide Djedje traveled to Ouagadougou this past weekend to consult Facilitator Blaise Compaore. A close aide to the Prime Minister told Ambassador on January 11 that Soro is seeking a larger role in overseeing the work of the CEI, and also wants a commission established to review cases handled during contestation period. The commission's key responsibility would be to reassure the FPI that only confirmed Ivorians are on the final list.

14. (SBU) The story quickly made headlines, dominating the news on January 11. The FPI has called on Mambe to resign and youth leader

Charles Ble Goude plans a rally this week to condemn both Mambe and the CEI. RDR leader Alassane Ouattara has called Mambe a decent and respectable man; the PDCI has sought to portray the government's story as incomplete and is promising that the CEI president will soon explain events himself.

15. (C)Comment: The CEI president's actions have seriously undermined the credibility of the electoral commission; it may be impossible for Mambe to regain respect. Further, he has given the presidential camp - which has resented the CEI since its inception - ample ammunition for arguing that the electoral commission should either be disbanded or reconstituted. PM Soro's plan would safeguard progress made to date in the identification/registration process but there is no guarantee that he will prevail. Post will keep Departament apprised of developments.
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